

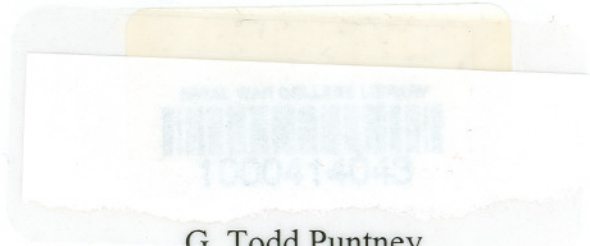
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The Inevitability of India



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A paper submitted to the Provost, Naval War College, for consideration in the Prize Essay Competition in the ADM Richard G. Colbert Memorial Prize category.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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14. ABSTRACT <p>Believing a hegemonic U.S. can reign indefinitely into the future is brassily self-defeating, for it fails to account for what happens to America—long accustomed to its position as first among all—when it one day discovers that it is, again, one among many. If anything, the “end of history” is little more than a pause, a time for course correction, to a future security environment dominated not by the U.S. but instead by counterbalancing distributions of political, economic, and military power.</p> <p>How the U.S. manages its own relative descent will mark how relevant it remains in world affairs; such a transition, therefore, represents a key strategic imperative. In this instance, recognizing the emergence of the most likely and most dangerous threat—manifested by the rise of China—necessitates an equally important evaluation of America’s unfolding opportunities. The emergence of India is as auspicious as it is inevitable, and the extent to which the U.S. can facilitate its ascension as a primary strategic partner may help describe how successful America is in securing its national interests in a future, multipolar world.</p>					
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*"[The U.S.] cannot avoid confronting the two great tests which challenge the longevity of every major power that occupies the 'number one' position in world affairs: whether, in the military/strategical realm, it can preserve a reasonable balance between the nation's perceived defense requirements and the means it possesses to maintain those commitments; and whether, as an intimately related point, it can preserve the technological and economic bases of its power from relative erosion in the face of the ever-shifting patterns of global production."*¹

Believing a hegemonic U.S. can reign indefinitely into the future is brassily self-defeating, for it fails to account for what happens to America—long accustomed to its position as first among all—when it one day discovers that it is, again, one among many. If anything, the “end of history” is little more than a pause, a time for course correction, to a future security environment dominated not by the U.S. but instead by counterbalancing distributions of political, economic, and military power.

How the U.S. manages its own relative descent will mark how relevant it remains in world affairs; such a transition, therefore, represents a key strategic imperative. In this instance, recognizing the emergence of the most likely and most dangerous threat—manifested by the rise of China—necessitates an equally important evaluation of America's unfolding opportunities. The emergence of India is as auspicious as it is inevitable, and the extent to which the U.S. can facilitate its ascension as a primary strategic partner may help describe how successful America is in securing its national interests in a future, multipolar world.

DECLINE OF HEGEMONY

In the waning years of the Cold War, Yale historian Paul Kennedy published a 500-year analysis describing the anecdotal and empirical trends of Great Power rise and fall. Essentially, it is a study in ends-and-means calculations, that the obligations incurred by a hegemonic nation to protect its national interests frequently outpaces its ability to fulfill them. As well, just as Brownian motion describes the diffusion of particulate in a liquid, Kennedy contended that concentrations of power in an international system are merely temporary and always susceptible to shifts and distribution. “The relative strengths of the leading nations in world affairs never remain constant.”² For the U.S. in the late 1980s, he suggested that “imperial overstretch” was written on the wall. Exhaustive strategic commitments, the increasing cost of a military



establishment to protect them, and the steady *relative* decline of U.S. economic power since its apogee in 1945 indicated that the U.S. was following a road illuminated by history.³

As a counterpoint to Kennedy's ardently "declinist" prescription, economic historian Walt Rostow said that there was a stark, perceptible difference in longevity between powers with hegemonic tendencies and those with more reasonable balance of power policies, and that the U.S. had, since its birth and without exception, followed the latter.⁴ "Such pursuit has permitted the United States to avoid the vicious circle which engulfed all true hegemonic powers over the past five centuries."⁵ After the fall of the Soviet Union and the decade of unprecedented economic expansion that followed, of course, Rostow's interpretation of Kennedy's work seemed to validate the notion that, while history's thread could weave its way through half a millennium and stitch together the quilt of international dynamics, the singular and unique nature of America was a different sort of fabric altogether.

But therein rested an essential dilemma. When the world snapped from bipolarity to unipolarity, the U.S., by default, became its sole hegemonic power.

President Bush's 2002 National Security Strategy describes a "distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests...to help make the world not just safer but better."⁶ To compensate for threats to such a strategy, the U.S. fundamentally requires military power strong enough to maintain its freedom of action and "defeat any attempt" by any competitor to rival or challenge the U.S., and that "our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States."⁷ Certainly, these are lofty, hegemonic propositions—to shape not just regions but the entire globe, with the U.S. as its benevolent leader. It is an extension of traditional U.S. interests—defending the homeland, ensuring the economic prosperity of the nation, securing a favorable world order within which the U.S. can freely operate, and inexorably spreading those fundamentally American values that define what

America is and what it means to the world⁸—in a unipolar world. And it's in this vein that Kennedy's analysis assumes a new, revitalized prescience.

Walter Russell Mead's description of hegemonic power—the synergism of sharp power (military strength and capabilities), sticky power (influence afforded by the attraction of economics), and sweet power (leverage based on the appeal of American culture and values)—provides an analytical framework from which to evaluate current, relative U.S. strength.⁹

In terms of sharp power, the U.S. clearly maintains a tremendous edge, in absolute terms, over any other potential rival. In relative terms, however, the U.S. is vexed by the tension between its capabilities and its interests: when “two major theater wars” gave way to “1-4-2-1”—especially in an era devoid of a large-scale peer competitor—Kennedy's proclamation of “imperial overstretch” seems to resonate, definitively, albeit a decade later.¹⁰ Even given a reduced, post-Cold War strategy like “1-4-2-1,” the U.S. would find itself hard-pressed to tackle more than one significant challenge to its interests simultaneously.¹¹ Beyond notions of ends-and-means considerations, though, is the prospect that technology proliferation may help even the field, thus reducing traditionally held U.S. advantages in weapons quality, training, and doctrine. Both the implementation plan for network-centric warfare—the fundamental construct behind defense transformation—and the National Defense Strategy recognize that potential bad guys are seeking to develop especially bad weapons that could disrupt U.S. military capabilities.¹²

From an economic, sticky power perspective, U.S. dominance in world affairs is as much a credit to the vibrancy of market capitalism it has perpetuated throughout the world as it is to the military power it achieved following World War II. But, as Kennedy described, the relative size of the U.S. economy as a percentage of that to the rest of the world has steadily declined, from about half of the world's GDP in 1945 to one-third by 1980 to one-fifth today to potentially less than one-tenth by 2050.¹³ As well, as an outgrowth of predominant American sticky power, the

manifestation of economic globalization into what Mead calls “millennial capitalism” implies that “any given state, even a superpower, is less and less able to influence or control the foreign policy of other countries.”¹⁴ The growth of regional economic institutions to which the U.S. is not a direct part, such as ASEAN and MERCOSUR and the EU, indicate a shift from the preponderant reliance upon the U.S. as the sole economy to a more diverse regionalism reflective of a new, less American, sticky power dynamic.

Politically and culturally, it goes without saying that resistance to U.S. leadership—again, particularly since the fall of the Soviet Union—has continued to gather rather than dissipate. A resurgence of national identity (say, in the case of France and Germany) against the backdrop of the threat of U.S. “cultural imperialism,”¹⁵ or the vocal and visible distancing from all things American, reflect a pronounced shift away from the appeal of U.S. values, or at least how those values are pushed onto the world.¹⁶ Indeed, promotion of democracy and human rights and market capitalism represent potentially revolutionary sources of instability to countries whose values are markedly different.¹⁷ Add to this a sense of international resentment that a country with less than five percent of the world’s population can so utterly define the agenda for the rest of it,¹⁸ and it therefore seems natural that American sweet power would be regarded more and more as exceptionally bitter.

Which all goes to say that, since the fall of the Soviet Union, the hegemonic position of the U.S. has steadily eroded. Hegemony, as Kennedy contends, is a losing battle, “for it simply has not been given to any one society to remain *permanently* ahead of all others.”¹⁹ If the shift from multipolarity to bipolarity to unipolarity is historically aberrant (at least in terms of its permanence)—if it’s an unnatural state of affairs—then the relative decline of the power of the U.S. is nothing more than a natural correction.²⁰ The challenge for the United States is not so much that it’s losing power, but how it manages the transition “to adjust sensibly to the newer world order.”²¹ Such a transition, invariably, depends upon the emerging security environment.

RISE OF CHINA

While the focus for the U.S. since 2001 has been terrorism, recent attention to the threat of more traditional challenges has emerged. Indeed, so long as the Westphalian system of nation-states remains the central organizing principle of the international community, non-state actors, while still able to inflict serious pain and suffering, are unlikely to pose as large a threat to national survival than are peer competitors. Following Kennedy's logic that currents of power eddy among nation-states, a new dynamism seems to be flowing, inexorably, to the East.

John Mearsheimer's international relations theory of "offensive realism" suggests that a nation's yearning for power is manifested by a survivalist, instinctive, status quo-disruptive bid for hegemony.²² Increasingly, China's ostensibly proclaimed national interests (national unity, internal and regional stability, sovereignty), objectives (rapid but sustained economic growth, at all costs, and modernization of its armed forces to close the gap with, or surpass, the U.S.)²³, and a study of its recent actions indicate it may be following an offensive realist approach. Divining China's carefully hidden intentions, of course, represents a strategic challenge for the U.S.

First, China's deliberate and long-term approach to increasing its regional and global power is based, in part, on the opportunistic creation of "strategic counterbalances" to increase its influence and limit that of the U.S.²⁴ "Beijing appears to pay particular attention to those areas and countries where it perceives U.S. interest and attention waning."²⁵ China's courting of other states frequently is based on notions of mutual respect, sovereignty, and non-interference. For nations increasingly resistant to U.S. influence or tired of its revolutionary policies, China's sweet power appeal—particularly for governments facing continual U.S. criticism (Sudan, Turkmenistan, Venezuela)—has given it a new geopolitical standing.²⁶

Second, in terms of its economic development, "if any country is going to supplant the U.S. in the world marketplace, China is it."²⁷ Indeed, some estimates indicate that by 2020, China's economy will be the largest in the world, and traditional U.S. advantages in education and technology show signs of weakening in the face of Chinese competition.²⁸ The spread of

Chinese economic influence, in its appeal to foreign investment and in its burgeoning relationships with companies and countries spanning the globe, underscores the rapid rise of its sticky power. In Asia, "China's economic diplomacy has already trumped that of the U.S."²⁹

Third, notwithstanding its affinity for euphemistic banner-waving and hand-holding "peaceful" intentions,³⁰ what happens next is, of course, the most important question. Kennedy suggests that rising powers develop a "lag time" between their economic might and eventual expressions of military or territorial expansion. In what coincides remarkably with a tidy description of China's current status, he says that while a nation may initially concentrate on its economic development at the expense of heightened defense expenditures, "a half-century later, priorities may well have altered."³¹ Annual, double-digit increases in the Chinese defense budget, indigenous production of both reverse-engineered as well as domestically developed military high technology, a renewed focus on the professionalism of its forces, and experimentation with new doctrine and warfighting concepts indicate that China, indeed, may be on the outer boundaries of its "lag time." Its hard power is increasingly difficult to disguise. When coupled with its tendencies to deliver the first blow (against the U.S. in Korea in 1950, India in 1962, or Vietnam in 1979), the implications are innately serious.³²

If Mead's formula for hegemonic power rings true, and if Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism helps explain national behavior, then it seems likely that, given an increasingly competitive geopolitical and economic environment, the potential exists that the crossroads of Chinese and American interests will become increasingly dangerous. In South Korea, a change in influence is taking shape: China is now the largest recipient of South Korean foreign direct investment and its second largest trading partner and recent polling suggests that a majority of South Koreans view China more favorably than the U.S.³³ In Central Asia, tension between U.S. basing agreements (with Uzbekistan and Krygyzstan) and Chinese interests in stability, national unity, and economic development indicate "troubling signs that China could resort to a zero-sum

‘Great Game’ strategy” in the region.³⁴ In Africa and South America, Chinese thirst for resources competes with American interests in regions long-neglected but nonetheless strategically important.

Add to this a rising sense of national importance, and offensive realism takes on a new meaning. Whether exploiting the innate social and cultural hostility towards Japan, instilling in its population the “twin virtues of patriotism and hard work” through PLA-run civilian boot camps,³⁵ or appealing to the deeply rooted Chinese sensitivities about the correlation between weakness and the “century of humiliation,”³⁶ the Communist government has tapped a well-spring of nationalism at the same time the country has emerged as a global power.

The question of whether or not “China is uniquely immune to the temptations of state power”³⁷—that it harbors no territorial or military ambitions external to itself, that it ignores an irredentist approach to Mongolia or Korea or Taiwan, that it remains satisfied, crowded and cramped, when the vast, unpopulated *lebensraum* of Russian Siberia beckons to the north—is admittedly difficult to predict. History, however, points in a certain direction: when an authoritarian regime, stoked nationalistic fervor, and expanding military power coalesce, pain and blood likely will follow.

MANAGING THE TRANSITION

Short of a neo-isolationist approach to the future, if the U.S. is relatively declining, if China is rising and its intentions remain opaquely elusive yet dangerously purposeful, how does a flagging hegemonist shape the future of the world in its interests? Multipolarity implies alliances, and within this context the U.S. has opportunity.

While Europe, of course, has served as the bedrock upon which American national security strategy has largely been configured since World War II, its relevance as power shifts to Asia is generally reduced. Besides the fact that fissures in the trans-Atlantic relationship have ruptured in recent years, “Europe offers America less opportunity and represents less threat than other parts of the world.”³⁸ Japan, while clearly an economic heavyweight and a vital linchpin

for the U.S. in Asia, is necessarily limited militarily and also politically: the strategic baggage of its inability to come to terms with its actions during World War II, at least in the minds of those who suffered under its imperial ambitions throughout history, automatically confer to it a status whereby key nations in the region are disinclined to accept its leadership. While this is neither to dismiss, totally, the importance of Europe or Japan, it merely demonstrates that, for the U.S., such legacy, 20th century relationships may not represent the best method to contain a 21st century threat. Thus the promise of India.

An interesting irony of the realist thinking of the Cold War is that the two largest democracies in the world would ally not with themselves but would instead court each other's mortal, non-democratic enemies. For the U.S. and India, their historical relationship explained a divergent worldview.³⁹

Once it gained independence, Indian foreign policy became nominally "reformist," in that, while it recognized the existence of a status quo international order, it could "make incremental changes to it in order to improve its own power potential and status."⁴⁰ As the self-declared leader of the non-alignment movement, it therefore found itself automatically disengaged by an irritated U.S. seeking to contain the Soviet Union, and, out of necessity, it steered toward an accepting and generous USSR. The U.S. responded in kind through a relationship with Pakistan. Additionally, fundamental economic differences constrained the two. While the U.S. embraced free markets, India instead chose a "Fabian socialism"⁴¹ to counter the "inequality and exploitation"⁴² inherent in capitalism. To compensate for social disparities wrought by uneven distribution of wealth and prevent foreign exploitation of the nation (as had happened with colonialism), India focused on self-reliance to the greatest extent possible: this meant a centrally controlled economy with state-run enterprises and protectionist trade policies, all of which provided firm structural and political impediments to foreign investment and development.⁴³

Ironically as well, though, is the notion that such a divergence would provide the cornerstone, a half-century later, for an Indo-U.S. strategic convergence.

In 1991, after the fall of the Soviet Union and the emergence of a reform-minded national government, India began its own transformation, partly out of recognition that its largest benefactor had vanished but primarily because it saw its neighbor to the north galloping forward with economic development. Always aware of its place in the world, it realized it had significant catching up to do.

Those reforms have remodeled an economy that saw little or no growth to one that has expanded annually at least 6% for over a decade.⁴⁴ While this falls behind the growth rate China has achieved and maintained, on average, since 1978, the difference illustrates competing approaches to development and explains the promise of India tomorrow.

China's growth has reflected a "top-down approach" to encourage foreign investment, limit domestic competition to state-owned enterprises, and a reliance on cheap labor to attract significant manufacturing capability of what are essentially high-demand but necessarily low-value items;⁴⁵ in short, it has extensively relied on foreign wherewithal and foreign input to become the center of the world's manufacturing capability of cheap goods. What's different about India is that, based on the legacy of the Cold War's history, it has achieved its growth not as a result of foreign investment but instead from the enterprising spirit of its homegrown businesses⁴⁶—its historical aversion to outside influence has created an environment favorable and opportunistic for Indian companies. "By relying primarily on organic growth, India is making fuller use of its resources and has chosen a path that may well deliver more sustainable progress" than China.⁴⁷ Coupled with more transparent banking and judicial systems and capital markets—and its propensity for developing highly skilled, innovative people—India may indeed outperform China over the long run.⁴⁸ That India can represent the world's second fastest growing economy based primarily on its indigenous efforts is testament to its future.

If Kennedy is correct in his assertion that the biggest threat to America and its way of life is how it embraces the changing, but natural, dynamics of a newly emerging multipolar world, then India's vibrancy—especially in a globalized, millennial capitalist economy—provides the U.S. a beacon in the night.

CONVERGENCE OF INTERESTS

Opportunity, of course, depends upon what the U.S. and India share in common; the residue of the Cold War would seem to imply that there might be significant inhibitors to any future relationship.

India seeks a multipolar world in which it has global influence.⁴⁹ This automatically confers to it a balance-of-power orientation that seemingly runs counter to notions of U.S. primacy, that it seeks a redistribution of global power *away* from the U.S. But recognizing three facts—that this is nothing more than an extension of its “non-alignment” history; that it yearns for geopolitical influence more relative to the size its population bestows it, but that it fundamentally recognizes it cannot do it on its own; and that, as trends indicate, the U.S. is relatively losing power anyway—skims past the now-shallow arguments about Cold War rivalries and nuclear weapons and permits an analysis of a likely convergence of much deeper interests.

When it comes to nuclear weapons, opponents frequently argued especially in the late 1990s that the Indian nuclear stockpile was a source of inherent instability in the region and counter to liberalist non-proliferation regimes. The Pakistani reaction, of course, with their subsequent nuclear weapons development and testing followed by years of black market technology proliferation, added credence to the notion that the Indian sub-continent was a dangerously impetuous powder-keg. But this misses the real dynamic. Indian justification for the resumption of nuclear weapons testing in 1998 after a 24-year hiatus was not out of fear of Pakistan but in response to the “China threat.”⁵⁰

India has a nervous, historical tension with China. Beyond a clash of different political ideologies and conflicting strategic interests simmers the residue of a war in 1962, continued

territorial disputes, Chinese contribution to Pakistan's military and nuclear weapons programs,⁵¹ fear of China's growing prosperity and military modernization, and a "perceived encroachment by Beijing upon the Indian sphere of influence."⁵² Notwithstanding recent Chinese efforts to coddle India and proclaim an emerging strategic partnership between the two, what is perhaps most alarming to India is a return, after 500 years, of China into the Indian Ocean.⁵³

Chinese funding of a new deepwater port in Gwadar, Pakistan, puts China in the proximity of the Persian Gulf as well as on the western flank of India. For both the U.S. and India, this has created "ripples of anxiety."⁵⁴ At the same time, China is developing a "string of pearls" of listening posts and ports from Bangladesh to Burma to Cambodia; this may be just as much an attempt to "expand its regional influence and box in India" as it is a reflection of its growing economic and political interests.⁵⁵

Add to this concerns about energy and resources, stability in the Middle East and influence in Central Asia, and terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction,⁵⁶ and it becomes clear that Indian and American national interests are frequently related and increasingly intertwined.

What's more—and in particular regard to the promise of an enduring relationship—is that, beyond a shared assessment of the likely threat, both India and the U.S. are fundamentally and essentially similar. Both share a tradition of democratic principles, a tolerant and secular society (generally) inclusive of ethnicities and religions, respect for the rule of law, subordination of the military to civilian control, and a spirit of innovation.⁵⁷ To a degree, there is a sense of naturalness to the prospect of what the opportunities may be. For the U.S., the advantages of India—the value a declining power places on a rising one—are palpable.

Besides the obvious, direct significance of the Indian market for the U.S. economy (a burgeoning middleclass of 300 million and growing, for instance⁵⁸), less directly but equally as important are its implications for shaping the other regional economies in a manner consistently

favorable to U.S. interests. While America will remain tightly integrated, economically, with South and East Asia, the fact that India will continue to grow means that its influence in those economies will necessarily increase. This sticky power, when philosophically and tangibly aligned with U.S. objectives, serves to promote the continued development of a favorable, regional order while simultaneously reducing the tentacles of Chinese influence. “Being a democracy that espouses social justice and economic growth, India provides an alternative role model to the nations of Asia that have based their economic growth models on the Chinese approach.”⁵⁹

India’s geographic position and the depth of its demographic melting pot mean that it is uniquely suited to assist the U.S. in other ways, as well. For example, surrounded by or in close proximity to most of the Islamic world as well as possessing the planet’s second largest Muslim population, it automatically has decades—indeed, an entire history—understanding and maintaining relationships in an area that, more and more, is anxious for a power other than the U.S.⁶⁰ India, like China, lacks the geopolitical baggage associated with hegemony, intrusiveness, and intervention, and shares, with much of the Muslim world, a common history manifested by Great Power colonial appetite. But unlike China, the potential of its sweet power lies not in a purely realist interpretation of an anti-imperialist balance of power redistribution, but instead with a more gentle, ideological promotion of values that’s more palatable than what is offered by the U.S., yet still in consonance with it. For instance, while the U.S. once relied on the appeal of its higher education system to inculcate American values on foreign students, the aftermath of Sept. 11 has created more obstacles than opportunity for Middle Eastern students. “India, with its large number of universities and its ability to provide a cheap and good education, makes a very attractive alternative” for the promotion of intimately related U.S. and Indian values.⁶¹

Militarily, while India’s near-term capabilities will remain far below those of the U.S., its efforts to modernize in order to increase its capabilities and project power can provide an

immediate, on-scene, credible force to check the potential of Chinese aggression in the Indian Ocean region, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. As its recent escorting of U.S. naval assets through the Strait of Malacca demonstrates, continual improvement of its regional capabilities can support greater U.S. freedom of action around the world. Elsewhere, India's experiences with peacekeeping operations⁶² coupled with its sweet power appeal means that, in a tight military relationship with America, the U.S. may find a partner that permits it to concentrate on Phase III core competencies while India focuses on Phase IV.

On India's part, it realizes that, in order to continue its economic growth and solidify its place in the world, the U.S. represents its best—and quickest—chance for success. "India will have to rely on the United States to achieve its own great power aspirations."⁶³ India craves global influence; the U.S. can facilitate it. It needs foreign investment and technology; the U.S. can provide it. It requires a stable world for continued and expanding access to resources; the U.S., like no other country, can assure it.

Above all and for both, they need each other to counterweight China. "The Indians identify China as a long-term strategic threat as well as an economic rival, [while on the other hand] an economically and militarily strong India, especially as an American ally, will create a countervailing force to China and a hedge against Chinese ambitions."⁶⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

Afford India Great Power status. Supporting Indian accession to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council is a logical and straightforward confirmation of its consequence. Similarly, officially recognizing India as a responsible nuclear weapons state would cement, in its mind, its place in an evolving world order; at any rate, India is unlikely to "rollback" its nuclear weapons program because it is both domestically popular and represents a source of national pride.⁶⁵ Beyond recognizing the obvious, though, is that the U.S. should take an active role in India's nuclear weapons program. To date, India has refused to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and likely will not until it has established what it

regards as a “minimum credible deterrent” (essentially, a strategic triad capable of ranging more than southern China).⁶⁶ This means that it will remain resistant to non-proliferation regimes until it can move beyond its limited delivery capabilities. U.S. technology figures highly in this equation. If the U.S. participates in India’s nuclear development, it not only would unquestionably demonstrate American commitment to its government and people, but also smooth out the “rough edges” of India’s nuclear status: it would provide a credible deterrent to China that is at once more survivable and more secure.⁶⁷

Tightly integrate both economies. While already the U.S. is India’s largest trading partner and India’s economic potential is poised for tremendous gains, “the glass of economic ties is less than half full.”⁶⁸ Besides some of the political and structural impediments leftover from the Cold War, extant difficulties steep beneath the surface.

If India’s greatest strength is its people who form the bedrock of its innovation, it’s also a potentially destabilizing problem. While Latin America and Africa are regarded as poverty stricken, more Indians live in poverty than do people in both those regions combined; fully half of India’s 1.1 billion people face such impoverishment, and an almost equal number are illiterate.⁶⁹ As a consequence, now and for the foreseeable future, India’s per capita income will remain low, which equates to lower standards of living, particularly for a population that will continue to expand at a rate almost double that of China.⁷⁰ Compounded with this is a severely lacking infrastructure; less than half of its roads are paved and only a third of its rural homes have electricity.⁷¹ As well, the extent of government reforms, while significant since 1991 and explanatory of India’s growth thus far, are not nearly as pervasive as they ought to be. Trade protectionism (such as tariffs), lingering price controls and publicly owned businesses, piracy of intellectual property—all reduce foreign investment opportunities in India, particularly in comparison to China; indeed, “the slow pace of economic reform in India” is the speed governor on its economy.⁷²

For the U.S., then, to facilitate the rise of India in a mutually beneficial manner, it must first push for deeply rooted, holistic, and permanent Indian government reforms to level the playing field in terms of trade and competition. Once those impediments to free market capitalism are gone, the appeal of India to U.S. firms (huge market, cheap labor, highly skilled and innovative workers who make high-value goods) should be reinforced by U.S. tax breaks or other financial incentives, as well as the possibility of a bilateral free trade agreement. The floodgates of U.S. foreign direct investment, which India sorely needs, would necessarily fling wide open, and the results would be pervasive: Indian infrastructure improvement (vital for its continued growth), coupled with an increase in both educational and employment opportunities; an increase in relationship stickiness based on the integration of both economies; a decrease in the mutual dependence upon China; and the continued emergence of a healthy, robust, and U.S.-aligned dynamism in Asia.

Increase military-to-military integration, with the ultimate goal of establishing a formal military alliance and a combined command. Institutionalizing the relationship in this manner, commensurate with a central criterion for the persistence of an alliance,⁷³ adds a permanent, enduring nature to it. This, as well, facilitates combined exercises and operational experiences and ensures a compatible doctrinal approach to warfighting. Since Indian military equipment is mostly Soviet-based and more than a generation behind that of the U.S.,⁷⁴ increased technology transfers are necessary to ensure interoperability; developing standards along the NATO model, coupled with an increased reliance on and acceptance of Indian technology (particularly with its software and information technology strengths) would demonstrate a healthy, symbiotic, “two-way street” relationship. Certainly, it remains circumspect that the U.S. will always possess technological advantages, and the increasing costs of weapons system development would seem to limit the U.S. in finding technological solutions to all of its militarily relevant threats. As such, relying on India for military technology, when prudent and

applicable, is not so much a case of outsourcing national security as it is taking advantage of potentially affordable, innovative solutions for which the U.S. might be hard-pressed to develop on its own. As well, India has already expressed interest in missile defense and improving its naval power projection capabilities; facilitating both with Aegis technology transfers, as the U.S. has done with Japan, would ensure the development of India into a potent maritime power.

CONCLUSION

While prospects for a future relationship with India are appealing and propitious, it doesn't imply a lack of difficulties nor dismiss the continued relevancy of other regional relationships as much as it highlights the importance of the ascendancy of India in a future context. There may be geopolitical blowback. Clearly, Pakistan would likely see a decrease in its value in a new strategic calculus, but in terms of the war on terrorism, maybe its importance to the U.S. should only be transitory when more enduring threats exist. Also, elements of an engagement policy with China will remain important, but given the enigmatic nature of its intentions, an Indo-U.S. alliance allows America to hedge its bets. Finally, whether India desires such an abiding kinship is circumspect based on its own skepticism and multipolar focus—but this certainly doesn't mean that a mutual sense of connection cannot be cultivated.

Underlying any future strategy, though, should be a conscious recognition of whether or not the U.S. will retain the freedom of action it necessarily has possessed for decades, particularly since the end of the Cold War. Extrapolating trends of today into tomorrow, Kennedy's premise, if briefly incorrect in 1987, seems more relevant now than before.

Which is not to say that the U.S. is irrelevant, nor will it be in twenty or thirty years. But certainly a new and different world order is emerging. The challenge is whether America embraces and gently steers it, or shuns it and clumsily stumbles upon a more hostile, aggravated, and multipolar international dynamic. Fortunately, the opportunity of India—as a full-circle extension of what began 500 years ago as the Europeans pushed off from their west coast—is promisingly alluring.

NOTES

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- ¹⁶ Ibid., 194-5.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., 60.
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- ¹⁹ Kennedy, 533.
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- ²¹ Ibid., 534.
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